

PAINTINGS OF THE  
SULTANS AND EMPERORS OF INDIA  
IN AMERICAN COLLECTIONS

RICHARD ETTINGHAUSEN

LALIT KALĀ AKADEMI  
INDIA

## LALIT KALĀ SERIES OF INDIAN ART

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Published by B. C. Sanyal, Secretary, for Lalit Kalā Akademi, Jaipur House, New Delhi. 1961  
Printed by Isaac N. Isaac at Vakil & Sons (Private) Ltd., Narandas Building, 18 Ballard Estate, Bombay-1

## **Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections**

**M**UGHAL MINIATURES have been admired in the West for a long time. In general, it seems to have been their Imperial aspect, realism and European features which appealed to the Western connoisseurs. Yet there were also many handicaps in realizing their artistic values and originality within the range of Muslim painting. For instance, the genetic relationship with Persian miniatures — Šafavid and Shaybānīd — saw in the whole of them only a variant of these schools (leading to the misnomer “Indo-Persian”) so that some thought them wanting in qualities to which they did not aspire. Again, since they usually consisted of portraits or of illustrations of dynastic or Persian literary texts which were totally different from those dealt with by the artists who painted Hindu subjects in Hindu idioms, they lacked religious or amatory interest and had little of romantic flavour. As to the European elements which the Mughal courts eagerly adopted to demonstrate their wide diplomatic and economic connections, their realistic approach to the world, and ability to present up-to-date dynastic symbols, they, too, put the art to a disadvantage, as it could not compete with Western renditions which, though using the same idioms, were created by different mentalities. In this respect these paintings were in the same position as the Persian miniatures of the Mongol period which had used Far Eastern features without being able to integrate them fully. And finally their very refinement put them in an unfavourable position in our time which admires the bold, even when unsophisticated, the primitive and the folklike in art.

While such attitudes were due to the preconceived ideas of the viewers, another handicap lay in the material itself. Just as in China, the Indian artists have for various reasons and at certain times copied and recopied earlier subjects; and the results were, as we now know, disadvantageous, even though — or rather just because — the painters tried at times to improve on the realism and refinement. In the past these copies were often regarded as originals and as these later versions by far outnumbered the models, they were bound to have influenced judgment and appreciation. Only lately have we been able to separate the wheat from the chaff. In other respects, too, we are at the beginning of critical research. Only recent studies have led to the disentanglement of the Deccani from the Mughal schools and to the recognition of the special qualities of the southern masters. And, finally, the very last years have witnessed the emergence of examples of pre-Mughal Muslim painting of the 15th and early 16th centuries; though the schools from which they hail cannot yet be fully delineated, they have helped us already to understand the growth of subsequent development.

When we want to appreciate truly the paintings of the sultans and emperors of India, we have to look first at what they tried to achieve and then at how these achievements

measure up within the possibilities of Muslim painting, both in scope and means of artistic expression.

During the early sultanates the range of manuscripts runs from the romantic and historical poems of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (Pl. 1) and the epic of Firdausī, to folk tales glorifying an early Muslim hero filled with missionary spirit, to recipes of a cookbook. Artistically the achievements lie here primarily in the direct though simple way of portraying scenes, the evolving of a bold, strong palette of colours, and a readiness to use foreign artistic idioms, yet reshaping and transforming them according to Indian principles. Though the first two of these aims were subsequently given up in the Muslim milieu, their early realization had a further development at the later Rajput courts. Actually, some of the most admired of the schools of Rajasthan and Central India seem to be prefigured in the art of the early sultans; and this early Muslim art may help to explain why there were quite a number of Muslim painters in the earliest period of Rajasthani illustration.

The Mughal period saw the greatest extension of the scope of painting witnessed in any Islamic country. This was possible because Akbar, the founder of this school, consciously gave up the traditional negative attitude which connected painting with idolatry. "There are many that hate painting; but such men I dislike. It appears to me that a painter has a quite peculiar means of recognizing God; for a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the Giver of life, and will thus increase in knowledge." The same intellectual independence was demonstrated by his orders to have the major Hindu classics translated and illuminated as well (Pls. 3-5), a rare feat equalling in perception that of al-Bīrūnī's *India* and Rashīd ad-Dīn's *Universal History* (which latter was on the author's orders, also illustrated). A man of such vitality was naturally able to influence the style of the paintings commissioned by him. Thus the legendary and historical works reflect Akbar's own active life and abound with crowded, tension-filled and realistically executed episodes of battle and intrigue, of dangerous exploits and peaceful interludes (Pls. 2 and 6). There had been more powerfully dramatic scenes in the Mongol period of Iran and more subtle realism in the work of Bihzād and his school, but by sheer numbers and variety of subjects these paintings, even if they are often overdone, represent in their totality a highpoint in Islamic art. Even such elusive subjects as landscapes and architectural vistas, both of which had been restricted to symbols in Arab painting and, in Persian miniatures, had but formed a delightful backdrop, take now the forms of panoramic sights which proceed in an intelligible manner from unit to unit and delight in presenting varied views (Pls. 2, 5-8).

In all these fields Akbar's painters have no match at any Muslim court; on the whole, not even at that of Jahāngīr, the emperor's son, whose inclinations and taste ran in different directions. Only one project of Akbar was taken up by his successor to be developed to new

heights. This is the field of portraiture. Akbar, himself, had sat for his likeness and he had all the grandees of the realm painted to be included in an immense album of which the court historiographer had said : "Those that have passed away, have received a new life, and those that are still alive have immortality promised them." Jahāngīr devoted all the subtlety and refinement that distinguishes his regime to this branch of painting which also influenced the now much rarer, illustrative paintings (Pl. 10). The same innate interest and keen power of observation which had led the naturalist and hunter in him to have unusual animals rendered in a realistic manner, induced him to have the facial features of his many courtiers likewise depicted with the same cool precision (Pls. 11-14). Jahāngīr kept such "portraits by imperial command" in his personal albums and he examined them closely; for him they were a means to review and assess the character of his officials, and he thus often appended his comments to the paintings. But under Jahāngīr, painting took on an even more personal character. It helped a rather ineffectual emperor to assert himself and to appease his mind in adversities. Thus he had himself shown not only in his imperial glory surrounded by his sons, grandees and ambassadors, but also, when appropriate, with symbols expressing his divine kingship, his noble lineage and his claims to justice and universal peace. More unusual still are the ways in which he used pictorial representation to announce his deliberate choice of moral values with which he was confronted as emperor (Pl. 14). Finally, paintings helped him to alleviate anxieties, such as when he had his court artists depict scenes in which an unyielding antagonist submits himself (Pl. 12) or an unvanquished enemy suffers his just fate. Such usage transcended anything past and current in Islamic painting; though the urge to depict such scenes are universally human and these themes occur not infrequently in Western art, in a Muslim milieu they found visual expression only in the paintings of this Indian ruler and then in most accomplished forms.

Compared with the Mughal paintings, the miniatures made for the Deccani kings were often executed in a more pronounced two-dimensional style or else in a more plastic one; they are more sensuous, their mood often gay and whimsical, or part somnolent, part energetic, their colour schemes novel, and occasionally Hindu topics not treated at the Mughal court are depicted. All this marks them as yet another distinct group. This is possibly the most Indian of the later Indo-Muslim schools; we are here both geographically and spiritually farthest away from the centres of Islam. Even a Persian theme rendered in the Deccan is looked at in a different way so that the finished painting reveals qualities which are not present in the original (Pl. 9).

Due to political and economic conditions, the West came to know this art fairly soon, and knowing was appreciating. The first outstanding admirer was no less a person than Rembrandt, who seems to have owned a collection of Mughal paintings and possibly also a few Deccani ones. He not only copied them in the years between 1654 and 1656 (and at least 20 have been preserved), but he introduced certain of their motifs in his own work, thus doing the same thing, though in a freer, more integrated fashion, as Jahāngīr's artists had done when they



Rembrandt's copy of two Mughal miniatures, the right showing the Khān-e Khānān, the left, an unidentified person with falcon. Pen and brush in bistre and ink. Red chalk wash, touched with red chalk and yellow crayon. White body colour (oxidized) on Japanese paper. 1654-56 (Benesch, No. 1203). New York, the Pierpont Morgan Library. 7-1/2" x 9-1/16".

had incorporated Western designs of Dürer, Beham and others in the marginal designs of the emperor's albums. Rembrandt's copies are quickly drawn sketches, and there is also an intimation of the artist's *chiaroscuro* style which does not exist in the original; yet the spirit of the distant art is fully realized and in many cases it is even possible to recognize the persons portrayed in the originals (text figure, p. 6, right). Mughal drawings have also been admired by Sir Joshua Reynolds and other prominent British figures. Indeed in recent centuries, collectors in Great Britain have always been particularly fond of this art. When the United States emerged as an art-collecting country, curators and collectors were soon attracted by the brilliant paintings of the Indian sultans and emperors. Just at that time an American museum had the good fortune to have Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy as its mentor and due to him the model collection of

Indian art was founded in the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston. This collection is well-known through Coomaraswamy's many pioneer studies. The present publication is, therefore, devoted to the holdings of other American museums which, though less known in India, nevertheless contain masterpieces; a small selection of these, up to the apogee of the art under Jahāngīr, is presented in the following pages. Since the coverage is necessarily limited, it was thought preferable to make artistic quality and historical significance the guiding considerations, rather than try to bring a balanced presentation of the various periods and pictorial aspects, especially as, for instance, scenes from historical manuscripts of the Akbar period, individual portraits and animal pictures are well represented in other publications.

While preparing this publication, the author had the unstinting support and ever-ready advice of Sri Karl Khandalavala and Mrs. Helen Chandra, for which he would like to express his appreciation. He feels particularly indebted to the authorities of the various institutions for their kind cooperation and permission to publish their treasures, especially to A. G. Wenley and John A. Pope of the Freer Gallery of Art, M. S. Dimand of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Frederick B. Adams, Jr., of the Pierpont Morgan Library and Edward S. King and Dorothy E. Miner of the Walters Art Gallery. He would also like to thank Professor Mohammed Wahid Mirza, formerly of Lucknow University, for his kind help in identifying the scenes from manuscripts of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, Professor Mohammed Nizammud-din, formerly of Osmaniya University, for the valuable assistance given in deciphering the flyleaf inscription in Khān-e Khānān's manuscript of the Freer *Rāmāyana*, and Mr. Rutherford J. Gettens of the Freer Gallery of Art for his skilful analysis of pigments.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of his examination of the originals shown in Pl. I, Mr. Gettens established that orpiment, azurite, ultramarine, indigo, vermilion, red lead, lake or organic red, lamp black, and gypsum white were thinly painted on the paper without a preparation layer. These natural and artificial pigments, in a pure state or in combination, resulted in at least thirteen tones. Orpiment for yellow is unusually lavishly used; azurite is the predominant dark blue pigment and ultramarine much rarer, while this relationship seems to be the opposite in Persian paintings. The water-soluble paint medium was probably animal glue.

PLATE 1 *Upper:* MAJNŪN THROWS HIMSELF ON LAYLĀ'S TOMB

Episode in *Majnūn u Laylā*, from a Ms of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavi's *Khamseh*. Sultanate period. Middle or second half of 15th century A.D. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 59.3. Same size

*Lower:* THE TRAITOROUS VEZIER REPULSED BY THE QUEEN

Episode in the *Hasht Bihisht*, from a Ms of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavi's *Khamseh*. Sultanate period. Middle or second half of 15th century A.D. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 59.1. Same size

These miniatures are from a now dispersed manuscript, of which over 25 paintings are known. Their Indian origin is suggested by the handleless ewers, cooking pots, thrones, the head veil of women, and the *chauri*-bearer, all of which are different or non-existent in Near Eastern manuscripts. The colour scheme is also richer and more dramatic than anything observed further west.

The make-up of the pages—double lines framing the verses, and a bandlike painting—recalls the *Īnjū* manuscripts of Shiraz, with dates from 1330 to 1341. These have red, yellow, or rarely, plain backgrounds, their colour scheme is restricted and they look pale in comparison to this manuscript; also they do not have such exuberant treelike plants and hardly ever use narrow segments of various colours to indicate clouds or the sky; the almond-shaped eyes with black pupil-less irises are also un-Persian. These three features occur, however, in Egyptian miniatures from the mid-14th century, which are more colourful than the contemporary Persian paintings. The active trade between India and Egypt could easily explain this second source of influence. However, Egypt alone cannot account for this Indian style, as the miniatures there are closer to a squarish format and unlike the Persian examples, they have little interest in architecture, landscape, or in tripartite indoor scenes. There is, possibly, also an Indian strain, exemplified by 10th-century examples in Cave 33 of Ellora, where one finds similar bandlike compositions with architectural and landscape elements and also the same type of eye and short black beard. (Kramrisch: *The Art of India*, Fig 12.)

The date is indicated by the rather crude *nasta'liq* writing. Little is known of the early history of this script in India, but in Iran, the country of its birth, similar forms could not be before c. 1450. As there is no trace of this style in later Muslim painting (though it lives on in that of Rajasthan, especially in the colouring) we cannot place it too close to the rise of Mughal painting, especially as there exists a later, still pre-Mughal manuscript which reflects this style. More difficult is the localization of this manuscript. There is no trace of the "farther eye" of Western India. However, the bold range of strong colours and treelike flowers are still to be found in 16th-century Deccani painting. Still these may be survivals of more universal features, not local characteristics. Close architectural parallels might eventually provide the best clues. In view of this, it is still impossible to decide whether this manuscript was made in Jaunpur, Delhi or, less likely, in Malwa or the Deccan.





## PLATE 2 ZARDHANK KHAṬNĪ BRINGS THE RING TO THE PRISON-KEEPER

Illustration to the *Ḥamza-nāmeḥ*. Akbar period. Circa A.D. 1561-1576  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 49.18. Size 26-7/16" × 20-1/8"

This is an unrecorded leaf from the earliest illustrated work of the Mughal period, which is also its largest and most extensive one. Its chronological place has recently been more accurately established by Rai Krishnadasa and Basil Gray. The great efforts of the 50 painters who produced the 1400 paintings on cotton cloth in the fourteen volumes were greatly appreciated by contemporary and later writers; their judgment is shared by modern connoisseurs.

When this painting was remounted in recent years, the inscription below it and the text on paper on its reverse were covered up so that the details of the story can no longer be established. A photograph made before the restoration provided, however, the caption.

The anonymous painter avoided the pitfalls sometimes found in the illustrations of the *Ḥamza-nāmeḥ*, such as over-crowding, an all-too-detailed architectural setting, oddly disproportionate figures or their puppetlike presentation. Here the action is concentrated in one area, set in juxtaposition to the calm outside the palace walls; the slightly larger size of the prison-keeper and of the figures around him is not disturbing, as it stresses their importance; and finally, well-expressed movements and sentiments of the main actors leave no doubt that we take part in a dramatic event, though the more passive figures, like the minor attendants and the prisoners, are still treated like puppets. The heavy Maltās, the prison-keeper, listening with disbelief and boredom, is remarkably portraitlike and forms a vivid contrast to the emphatic gesture of the dark-skinned Zardhank Khaṭnī and even more so to the wild movements of the figure turning his head in the courtyard. All this is presented with the dynamic quality, bursting energy, and love for detail which distinguishes this manuscript. One can also observe that the figures are clothed in unadorned garments of bold colours much like those of the *Khamseh* of Amīr Khusrau (Pl. 1), while the elaborate carpets and tilework reflect mid-16th century Persian art. The scene is iconographically related to one in the *Bhārat Kalā Bhavan*.

At least 26 pages of the *Ḥamza-nāmeḥ* are known to be in America: five in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, four in the Brooklyn Museum, three in the Freer Gallery, two each in the Boston Museum, in the collection of J. F. Lewis, Philadelphia, and in another private collection, and one each in the Art Institute of Chicago, the Fogg Museum, Cambridge, the Cincinnati and Philadelphia Museums of Art, the Philadelphia Free Library, the Kevorkian Foundation, New York, and the collections of G. P. Bickford, Cleveland, and S. Minkenhof, New York. Most of these belonged to the album which General R. K. Monif bought from a sister of the Shah of Iran in 1912; of these 25 came to the United States and were sold at auction in New York in 1923.







### PLATE 3 THE NYMPH RAMBHĀ APPROACHES VIŚVĀMITRA

From a Ms of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Akbar period. A.D. 1587/88-1598/99 (A.H. 996-1007)  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 07.271, fol. 61 recto. Same size

This is a miniature from a manuscript of the Persian translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. According to a long Persian inscription on the flyleaf by its erstwhile owner, the great general and scholar 'Abd ar-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad Bairām, the Khān-e Khānān (for his portrait see text figure, p. 6), it was made for him as a copy of Akbar's own manuscript. The volume now lacks the final pages, but the inscription states that it had originally 135 paintings. Of these 130 are preserved though some in a damaged or worn condition. The flyleaf carries various further entries and two seals of officials of Shāh Jahān, one with the date corresponding to 1638/39. In 1890 the volume formed part of an exhibition held in London of "Indo-Persian pictures and manuscripts belonging to Col. H. B. Hanna." In 1907 the manuscript was bought by Charles Lang Freer of Detroit and was given by him together with his large collection of Oriental and American art to be part of the national museum bearing his name in Washington.

According to the inscription on the flyleaf, the manuscript was started in 1587/88 (A.H. 996). As Badā'ūnī completed his translation only in 1591 (A.H. 999), this would mean, if correct, that each part was at once copied and illustrated after the translator had finished his work. In any case the manuscript took several years to complete as the Khān-e Khānān states that it was finished only in A.D. 1598/99 (A.H. 1007). The miniatures are possibly in a slightly earlier style as they copy Akbar's version. While the manuscript was being prepared, the Khān-e Khānān was Governor of Jaunpur, then of Multan and Bhakkar, from where he conquered Sind. Later on he directed military operations in the Deccan. It seems, however, that this has little bearing on the solution of the problem where the manuscript could have been made, as the Imperial model would have hardly been taken to a more distant place and was probably closely followed.

The 130 miniatures are in various styles (as is only natural when a number of artists are executing them) and of different quality, and they range from rather simple paintings to most elaborate ones. The one here illustrated has no signature or attribution (as others have). Although the combination of cypress and almond trees, the forms of the rocks and the body of water in the foreground are originally Persian themes, the all-over treatment, the colour and spirit of the painting are Indian. The juxtaposition of the two figures in the verdant landscape is rather dramatic, especially in view of the bright, hot colours of the would-be seducer's garments and the ring of flames which, though it being summer, the ascetic has lighted as a form of penance.



## PLATE 4 HANUMĀN CARRIES THE MOUNTAIN OF HEALING HERBS

From a Ms of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Artist Zain al-‘Ābidīn. Akbar period. A.D. 1587/88-1598/99 (A.H. 996-1007)  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 07.271, fol. 234 recto. Size 10-5/16" × 5-3/8"

This miniature (from the *Rāmāyaṇa* manuscript made for the Khān-e Khānān) shows how Hanumān brings the top of a Himalayan mountain with healing plants, so that the killed and wounded of the army of monkeys and bears would be restored to life. The two-dimensional and decorative treatment has a Persian quality, but the iconography and the lyricism of the landscape are quite Indian. Hanumān, bounding into the sky, the restrained yet varied delineation of nature and the delicate colours combine to make this an unusually appealing painting.

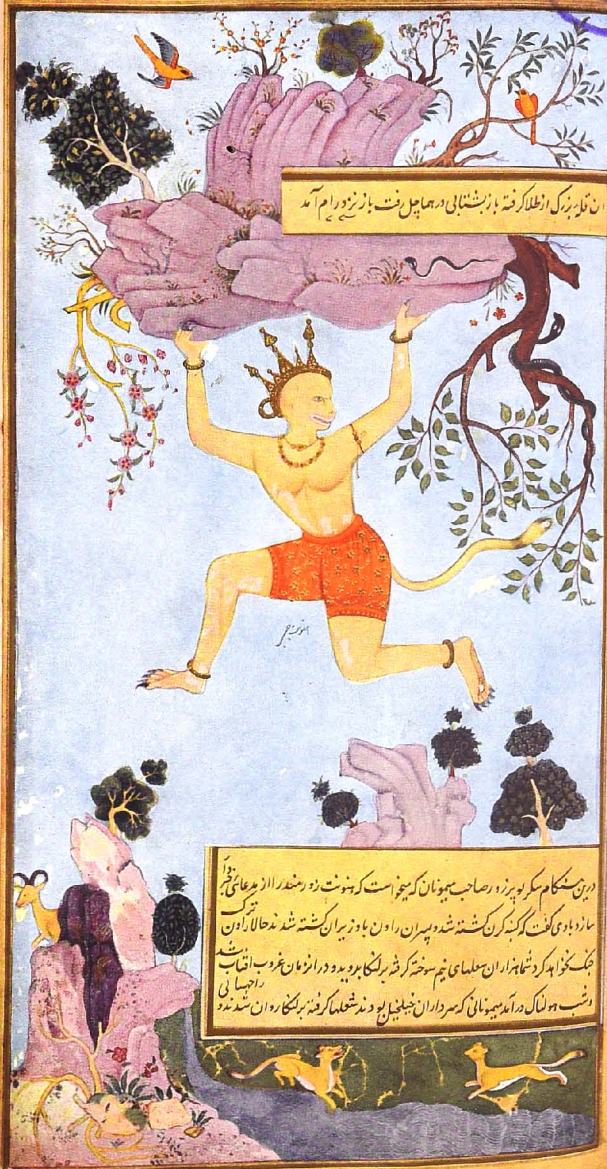
This miniature is one of 50 in the volume with an attribution at the lower edge, on the protective leaf covering the miniature (as in this instance), or in one case in the painting itself. The following list gives the names of twelve artists together with the numbers of their paintings: 1. Fāḍil (10); 2. Kāleh Bahār (1); 3. Kamāl (4); 4. Mūhan (1); 5. Mushaffaq (or Mushfiq) (1); 6. Nadīm (3); 7. Nādir (1); 8. Qāsim (4); 9. Sādī (1); 10. Shyām Sundar (13); 11. Yūsuf ‘Alī (7); 12. Zain al-‘Ābidīn (1). Three further names are illegible. In each case only one name is given. Only five or six of the artists are known from other manuscripts (Nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10); some of the names are common (Nos. 3, 7, 8) or, in the case of Shyām (No. 10), it is here combined with Sundar; it is therefore uncertain whether these are the artists already known. Also, none of them occurs in the list of 17 artists mentioned in the *Ā’in-e Akbarī*. Unlike the attributions in practically all other Akbarī manuscripts, here more names are Muslim. Finally, while the inscription of the Khān-e Khānān on the flyleaf mentions no specific artists, it states that the work “was finished under the supervision of Maulā Shikabī Imāmī.” This was a much appreciated poet; as such he is dealt with in the *Ā’in-e Akbarī* and mentioned in the *Ma’āthir al-Umarā’*.

These data lead one to the following conclusions: the Khān-e Khānān apparently employed mostly different artists from those working in the Imperial studios; he recruited them primarily among his coreligionists (possibly because he was not induced quite as strongly as Akbar to do otherwise out of religious and political consideration); this being a minor workshop which furthermore took the imperial manuscript as model, it was not thought necessary to have two or three artists join forces to get a complex, versatile and highly finished picture; and finally, it was, for the same reasons, considered sufficient to have a well-liked poet as head of the studio, rather than a professional scribe or painter, as, e.g., Bihzād had been in the library of Shāh Ṭahmāsp Ṣafavī.

While several other Hindu classics were translated into Persian on Akbar’s instigation, the *Rāmāyaṇa* must have been particularly dear to him, as shown by the fact that he issued a half mohur gold coin with the figures of Rāma and Sitā, the heroes of the epic.



آن قلای بزرگ از طلا گرفته باز بشتابی در هم چیل رفت باز نزد ارام آمد



## PLATE 5 THE GOLDEN CITY OF DVARAKA

From a Ms of the *Razm-nāmeḥ*. Akbar period. End of 16th century A.D.  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 54.6. Same size

This miniature comes from a now dispersed Ms of the *Rāzm-nāmeḥ*. Three other leaves which seem to belong to the same Ms are in the Metropolitan Museum. Though their style may be slightly later, these are almost the equal of the paintings in the celebrated Jaipur copy. The latter must have been finished shortly after January 1589/(Rabi' I) 997, when Faiẓi finished turning into highly ornamental prose some parts of the introduction by his brother Abu'l-Faẓl under whose auspices the translation had been made; it existed in 1595/96 when Abu'l-Faẓl refers to it.

The miniature represents the city of Dvaraka, newly built on the instigation of Kṛishṇa. It replaced Mathura after the ferocious attacks of the demon King Jarāsaṇḍha had caused it to be given up. The dark-skinned, yellow-robed Kṛishṇa is seen enthroned in a chamber of the golden city, respectfully attended by his brother Balarāma and other figures, some of whom offer gifts. The peaceful scenes at the edge of the ocean in the foreground — a herdsman bringing his cows to a pen and two townsmen talking near the city gate — indicate that the people are far from the terrors of Mathura. The vivid colours used in the foreground and for the tiny figures within the city form a striking contrast to the golden buildings.

In the same scene in the Jaipur manuscript (Hendley, Pl. CXL) the figures of the foreground subjects are more diversified and take in a larger area; also in the city there are more trees and gardens. The impact of the golden structures is therefore not as overwhelming as in the Freer miniature. But the two paintings are closely related, as is clear from the composition and such details as the homing herd of cows and the irrigation device.

In the *Ḥamza-nāmeḥ*, in spite of all its innate power, no true sense of perspective exists; the figures in the background are often larger than those in front; the architecture looms too big in the picture without forming a clear pattern and decorative features are overemphasized. All these problems have now been successfully solved. Even the placing of Kṛishṇa in the background and the concomitant reduction of his size does not diminish our awareness of him and his importance. The layout of Dvaraka can be easily grasped, while one enjoys its walls and gates, the palace, the three Hindu shrines and what seems to be a domed Muslim mausoleum in the background. More unusual are the raised lines and dots on the two Hindu temples and the city gate; this is combined with minute coloured tilework and, occasionally, with stippling to relieve the monotony which an unrelieved array of golden structures would have presented.

The approximate cost of such an Akbari miniature can be established by analogy, as Prof. Muh. Shafi deciphered the accounting on the colophon page of the Jaipur *Rāzm-nāmeḥ*. This manuscript with its 165 miniatures cost a total of 4,024 rupees, the paintings alone 3,602 rupees; this averaged Rs. 21.83 for a single miniature.





## PLATE 6 THE BRONZE STATUE WARNS THE KING

From a Ms of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavi's *Khamseh*. Artist Sūr Dās (?) Gujarāti. Akbar period. Probably Lahore. A.D. 1597/98  
Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. W. 624, fol. 208. Size 9-1/4"×5-9/16"

This is one of 21 miniatures in a sumptuous manuscript of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavi's *Khamseh*, written in the 42nd Ilāhī year by Muḥammad Ḥusain Zarrin Qalam ("The Golden Pen"), the same scribe who copied the *Bahāristān* (of the Bodleian Library) in Lahore in 1594/95. Eleven of the paintings have attributions (though some of them now mostly obliterated) and they are by such well-known Akbarī artists as La'ī (2), Sānwala (2), Manohar, 'Alī Qulī, Dharam Dās, Nar Singh, Jagannāth and Sūr Dās Gujarāti, also by Miskīna and Farrukh working jointly. In addition there are decorative chapter headings and one initial *shamseh* design by Maṣṣūr Naqqāsh, Ḥusayn Naqqāsh, Khwājeh Jān Shīrāzī, and Luṭf Allāh Mudhahhib, and many fine marginal decorations of the order of those in the *Bahāristān* of 1594/95 and the later Jahāngīr albums (unfortunately these marginal designs have been cut at the edges when the manuscript was remargined). The volume is bound in one of the now rare lacquered bindings, showing elaborate scenes on a deep red ground, in this case, a royal tiger hunt on the top cover, and a fight between angels and demons on the lower one. Another indication that this is an outstanding manuscript is the fact that one painting (now without attribution) has been closely copied by the well-known miniaturist Hāshim in a later manuscript of the *Khamseh* in the former Preussische Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. (Arnold-Grohmann, *The Islamic Book*, Pl. 86.)

The scene, the only one in the volume by this artist, is the last to illustrate the *Hasht Bihisht*, the fifth poem. It depicts the story told by the Princess of Khwārizm: a king who had no faith in women remains a bachelor, but is finally persuaded to marry. Four beautiful princesses are selected and brought to his palace. The miniature depicts the king's meeting with the first of them who faints (or pretends to faint) as the king playfully approaches her. Upon this the talismanic image made specially to warn the king against liars and hypocrites begins to laugh. The princess proves, indeed, faithless. The king finds her, one night, with her paramour, a black muleteer, who beats her mercilessly for being late at the tryst.

In illustrating the story, the artist uses the customary high point of view. This allows him to give a complete insight into various sections of the palace compound and the many activities going on inside and outside it, all of which are depicted with loving care and realism, although most are not really necessary for the story. In spite of the many diverse actions and architectural units, Sūr Dās has achieved an all-over unity of design. The spatial depth within the painting, created by means of linear perspective, is here more pronounced than is usual in this period.





## PLATE 7 THE RENDERING OF JUSTICE

Illustration to Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī's *Maṭla' al-anvār*. Akbar period. Probably Lahore. A.D. 1595-1600  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran). No. 13.228.26. Size 9-3/4" × 6-1/4"

In this illustration by an anonymous painter to Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī's *Maṭla' al-anvār*, a shah submits to justice after he has accidentally killed a shepherd boy while hunting. The king is so aroused by his deed and the mother's grief that he dismounts, asking her to cut off his head with his sword if she desires revenge for her child. Two dishes are placed before her, one to hold the king's severed head, the other filled with gold which she may accept in lieu of it. The distraught mother is so touched by the king's sense of justice that she foregoes retaliation and accepts the gold.

In view of their size and vivid gestures and because they are fully shown, the shah and widow stand out as the main actors of the scene with the bright golden vessels marking the visual centre. The pleading widow is, by colouristic means, clearly stressed as the main figure. The striking note of her blue cloak is brought out even more vividly by contrast with her pinkish gown and the yellowish streak in the nearby ground. Compared to her dress the more subdued garment of the king points to his submissive role. The dead son on the ground appears in strong, yet sombre colours. The fence of thorns into which the youth has fallen, the blood streaming from his wounds and his dark, turned-over vessel dropped into the tidy order of the fields all underline the drama and its initial terror. The attendants at both sides serve as foils; they also provide spatial depth.

The other means to create a perspective is the landscape, with its diagonal stream, valleys, and rocks, all leading the spectator into the background. Various animals and a few figures enliven this background scenery, and as they are smaller in size, lighter in colour and less distinctive, they, too, contribute to the sense of perspective. Even the fine *nasta'liq* writing, far from being a disturbing element in the artistic composition, contributes to the feeling of depth as it is given on a neutral plane of reference, in the foreground. Apart from its perspective function, the extensive landscape, its peaceful serenity and idyllic elements provide relief from the tenseness of the main scene.

The rendering of the distant view recalls the landscapes in Italian and Flemish paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries; European models have also been used for the three figures on the right and for the high-stepping wanderer in the far right background. On the other hand, the vertically striated rocks go ultimately back to Persian prototypes of the Tīmūrīd period, just as the horses in the distant pasture are derived from a miniature painted by Bihzād in a Būstān Ms dated 1488, now in Cairo. Yet in spite of these foreign strains, this is a typical Mughal creation of around 1600 whose style is related to the Bodleian *Bahāristān* of 1595. The Metropolitan Museum owns eight paintings from this fragmentary *Khamseh* Ms, of which four are attributed to Basāwan, Manohar, Dharam Dās, and Nar Singh.



باطنی را برست و را را و را  
 یافتند و در پست برست  
 آید آن که در کوه برست  
 حشمت طلب کرد و برست  
 گفت که برست و در کوه  
 باطنی را برست و را را و را  
 یافتند و در پست برست  
 آید آن که در کوه برست  
 حشمت طلب کرد و برست  
 گفت که برست و در کوه

## PLATE 8 THE MARTYRDOM OF AL-HALLĀJ

Akbar period, Allahabad. A.D. 1602 (A.H. 1011)

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Ms W. 650, fol. 22 vo. Same size

This painting is the second of 14 anonymous illustrations in a *nasta'liq* manuscript containing the Persian *Ghazals* and *Rubā'īs* of Amīr Najm ad-Dīn Ḥasan Dihlavī (1253-1327 ?), a court poet of Sultan 'Alā ad-Dīn Khaljī. The volume was finished in Allahabad on the 27th of Muḥarram 1011 by Mīr 'Abd Allāh Kātib, called Mushkīn Qalam ("The Musky Pen"). This is indicated by the colophon and a detail in the painting around it, since in the latter an inscribed sheet is held by Mīr 'Abd Allāh himself, who is shown working on a platform in the shade of a tree, assisted by a servant.

Many of the miniatures in this volume show a rather hard and not too engaging style. This miniature is, however, the work of a very sensitive artist, and the tragic end of the famous Persian mystic which took place in Baghdad in 922 is vividly presented. The painter was chiefly concerned with bringing out the facial character, the attitudes and emotional reactions of the various figures. Particularly fine is the rendering of the martyr, but also those of the distressed figure tearing his pale blue coat on the right, of the man with outstretched hands in front, and of the man who has thrown himself on the ground and is calmed by a companion. Their anguish becomes all the more vivid by contrast to the callous attitudes of the executioners.

The colouring is rich, yet carefully controlled as shown by the free balancing of related hues on the right and left. There is a fine sense of perspective. The group of figures near the town of Baghdad is reduced in size compared to those of the foreground, and the figure at the city gate is smaller yet. The river leads the eye to the farther distance and its colour is finally taken up by the bluish edge of the central hill of the background. The indianized Baghdad is shown as a "Red Fort" with a *chhatrī* over the gate and a white bulbous dome crowning a tower.

In spite of its charged atmosphere, a sense of serenity permeates the scene, a mood especially due to the noble figure of the martyr. The peaceful landscape, too, gives some relief from the stirred-up feelings.

Allahabad, founded and built by Akbar, was the base of Prince Salīm, the heir-apparent, during his rebellion against his father; later it became his official residence (1599-1604). The prince appears in one of the miniatures of the manuscript, depicting a game of polo (fol. 41 ro). The style of the paintings in this manuscript was continued in the early years of his reign as Emperor Jahāngīr. It is therefore quite likely that this manuscript was executed for the prince, or is, at least, due to his influence and taste. In any case, the stay of Salīm in Allahabad probably accounts for the organization there of a major studio in the late Akbar period, though the existence of such a centre was heretofore not known. A few of the miniatures in this manuscript are also important to explain certain provincial Mughal paintings (fols. 62 ro, 157 ro).





## PLATE 9 READING YOUTH WITH FALCON

Attributed to Muḥammad 'Alī. Deccani, School of Bijapur. Circa A.D. 1610  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 53.93. 6-13/16" × 3-7/8"

A young man with a book (or with a cup and flask) seated on a *taburet* in a decoratively rendered landscape is a Persian theme, popular in the school of Isfahan in the early 17th century, during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās. The British Museum owns a well-known example signed by Riḏā-ye 'Abbāsī, which is said to be after Moḥammadī of Herāt. There are also Mughal versions of the 17th century. The figure in the Freer painting and especially the garments and the colour range are all still fairly close to the Persian original, though with more feeling for plasticity; but the landscape which in Iran is only faintly indicated as a delicate, rather abstract background drawing, is in a different style. This applies to the flowering plants, the two leafy tree shoots, and the straight trunk, the clouds along the upper edge and particularly to the floral semé on the dark background, all of which point to the fact that this is a Deccani version from Bijapur. This explains also the intensity of the colours which is greater than in the Persian originals and made more pronounced by the olive green fond.

Muḥammad 'Alī to whom the miniature is attributed is a common name; but there is another contemporary painting with the same name which has also been thought to be Bijapuri : the well-known "Poet in a Garden" in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This, too, has a somewhat Persian appearance which had induced Binyon to write "assuredly painted by a Persian though in India." It has long been recognized as a masterpiece, but since there was no other painting with such an attribution nor anything known about a painter with such a name, an artist called Muḥammad 'Alī was discounted and the paintings given to Abu'l-Ḥasan or Farrukh Beg. The appearance of the Freer painting supports the original designation and provides the basis for a new master painter in the Deccan. Of the various miniatures associated by Robert Skelton with the Boston painting, the "Young Prince on Horseback" formerly in the collection of Baron Maurice de Rothschild in Paris is close in many details, such as a tree shoot of the same species, a series of flowering plants along the lower edge and the dark background leaving only a narrow sky area on top of the picture. However, we do not yet know whether these are the general features of the whole school or the personal peculiarities of an artist.

The connections between Persia and the Deccan are well-known and even earlier Deccani painting reveals Iranian influences, just as does the architecture. Since Shāh 'Abbās had diplomatic relations with the South Indian Muslim kings "whose protection," as Sir Thomas Roe said, "the Shahas taketh to hart" it is easy enough to imagine ways and means by which Persian miniatures could have reached the Deccani court.





PLATE 10 THREE MINIATURES FROM A MS OF SA'DĪ'S *GULISTĀN*

Jahāngīr period. Circa A.D. 1610

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. W. 668, fol. 48. Same size

The painting in the middle illustrates the story of how a rider arrives to inform a dying Arab king that a certain fortress had been conquered, and the army and people of those parts had submitted; whereupon the king sighs and replies that this good news is not for him, but for his enemies, that is, his heirs (chapter I, no. 9). The scenes on top and bottom refer to two of the many accounts in the Persian classic, dealing with dervishes and shaikhs. Six other illustrations from the same manuscript and now pasted on three album leaves (two in the Walters Art Gallery and a third owned privately) illustrate the stories 4, 7, 13, 32, and 40 of the first chapter. This suggests that the original manuscript must have had many more miniatures.

Though these paintings are illustrations, they do not primarily portray dramatic events in the manner of the paintings of the Akbar period, but rather psychological situations or states of mind, expressed in the various beautifully executed faces. In this respect the manuscript (just like the miniature in Pl. 8) is the connecting link between the earlier action pictures and the portrait studies for which the Jahāngīr period is justly famous. On the other hand the new horizontal format and rowlike arrangement of the figures provide a model for later manuscripts, such as the *Gulistān* and *Būstān* written in Agra in 1628-1629, in the early Shāh Jahān period, though these lack the earlier subtlety and refinement.

The three paintings are the work of two painters, as the scale of the figures of the top one is larger than in the two lower ones, its colour scheme paler and less rich, and there is less stress on decorative detail and spatial depth. All are outstanding in their delicate, miniaturelike painting and their devotion to fine details. This is evident in the haggard face of the dying king, with its strongly protruding nose, barely visible eyes and particularly its yellowish complexion which is set in contrast to the pinkish flesh tones of the other figures and the various white areas; in the various facial types of the three shaikhs in the lower miniature; and even in such minute features as the books in the top painting, where the left one is covered with marbled paper, while the right one has a leather binding with a black leather centre and reddish border, each tooled with a different tone of gold. In their stress on richly tiled dadoes, elaborate carpets and architectural detail the two lower paintings have in spite of their Indian flavour, a Persian accent. Persian features are also found in other early Jahāngīrī miniatures, there representing a stylistic tendency, which had its origin in the heir-apparent's rebellion against his father and his pro-Hindu proclivities. This Persian aspect is all the more obvious by contrast with the top miniature which lacks these features and thus makes a more Indian impression. It is quite possible that the horizontal format goes back to the Sultanate period where it was common (see Pl. 1).





## PLATE 11 DURBAR OF JAHĀNGĪR

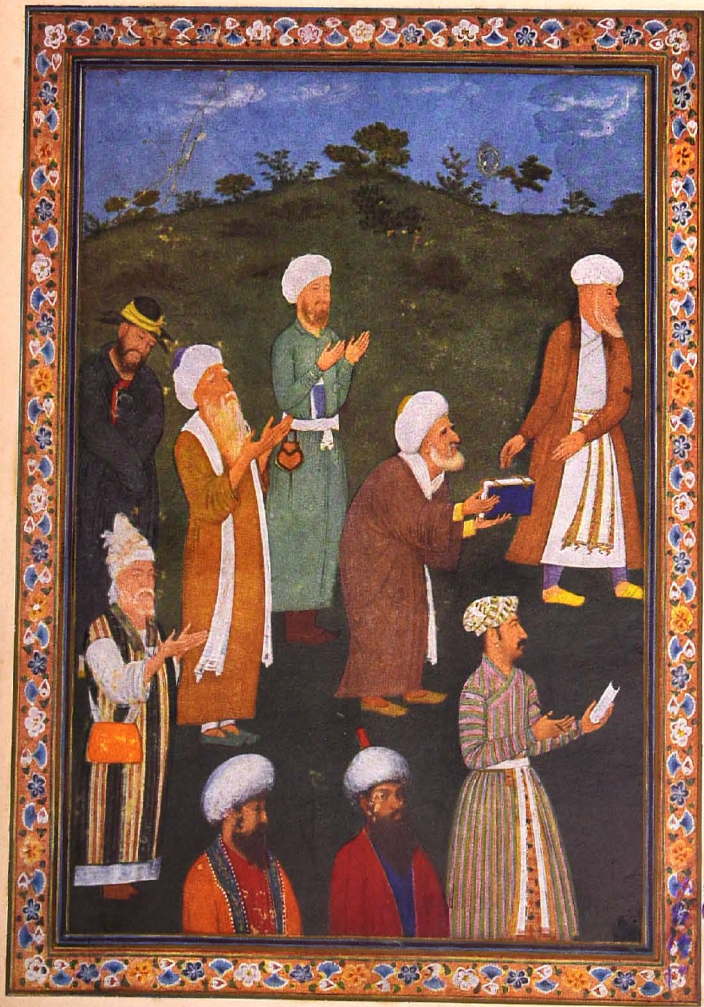
*Left:* Artist Abu'l-Ḥasan Āmūkhtsāz. Jahāngīr period. *Circa* A.D. 1619-1620  
Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. W. 668, fol 37. Same size

*Right:* Artist Abu'l-Ḥasan. Jahāngīr period. Ajmer. A.D. 1615 or 1616  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 46.28. Same size

Each of these two miniatures is the only preserved half of a double composition. They are of the same size and have the same border. Even more important, each demands a supplementary composition of the order of the composition provided by the other; both are by an Abu'l-Ḥasan, although in the left painting the word "Āmūkhtsāz" follows the name, perhaps indicating a disciple of the famous master. Still, the two paintings cannot have belonged together, because the left miniature seems later in style, has stronger colours, and what are only minor persons in a durbar are given in larger size than the main figures shown on the right side.

The twice-signed right miniature carries a statement in the inscription on the globe serving as the "World-Seizer's" footstool that it was painted in Ajmer. Since Karan the son of Rāṇā Amar Singh of Mewar is shown, it can only have been executed between his submission in 1615 and Jahāngīr's departure in 1616. The emperor appears in the prime of his life. In his belt he carries a key which fits into the keyhole of the globe, apparently indicating that "the key of victory over the two worlds is entrusted in his hand." The three princes and members of the court are distributed so that on the left is to be found Murtazā Khān, Karan, Prince Parvīz, Prince Dāvar Bakhsh Sulṭān, called Mīrzā Bulāqī, the son of Prince Khusrau; on the right is Prince Khurram, Anīrā'ī, "the Emperor of Rum in ancient times," Mahābat Khān and Āṣaf Khān; while in the front row the following courtiers are placed (from right to left): Dayānat Khān, I'timād ad-daula, Rustam Mīrzā, Ibrāhīm Khān and Khwājeh . . . Bakhshī (name lost). This *bakhshī* is obviously calling for a group to be ushered into the imperial presence. This is exactly what is represented in the left painting where the bearded Khwājeh Jahān and Mīrzā Ṣādiq Bakhshī are in charge and direct the waiting figures. The main figure of these is the stooped Persian poet Sa'dī. He is approaching as if he were offering his book to his royal patron, an ancient pictorial motif. Behind him are chanting or meditating dervishes, none of whose names are given. The left figure in the foreground is, however, designated by an inscription as Bāyazīd Yildirim, while the right one, to judge from his turban, seems to be a shah of Iran. Bāyazīd was the Ottoman sultan who was defeated by Jahāngīr's forefather Tīmūr Lang. Like the miniature on Pl. 14, these two paintings seem to render more than an ordinary durbar because by their inverted protocol they indicate the emperor's preference for mystic teachers so that the great rulers of the world have to stand in the positions of minor officials waiting their turn.





## PLATE 12 JAHĀNGĪR'S DREAM OF SHĀH 'ABBĀS' VISIT

Artist Abu'l-Ḥasan "Nādir az-Zamān", son of Āqā Rizā. Jahāngīr period. A.D. 1618-1622  
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 45.9. Same size

According to the inscriptions this painting represents a dream in a well of light as experienced by Jahāngīr. In it the Shah of Iran appeared to the emperor and thus made him happy. For the miniature which was hurriedly executed for Nowrūz, the celebrated painter Abu'l-Ḥasan, inquired about the likeness of Shāh 'Abbās from many people who had seen him. On the basis of this information and using imagination and artistic skill, he achieved a portrait which most agreed was like the Persian ruler.

The historical background of this painting is the tension between India and Iran about Qandahār. After an abortive attempt to capture the town from the Indians after Jahāngīr's accession, in 1606/1607, the issue was handled diplomatically by several Iranian embassies, and in particular by the mission of Khān 'Ālam to Qazvin and Isfahan. Shortly after the return of the Indian ambassador Qandahār was finally captured by Shāh 'Abbās in 1622. The revolt of Shāh Jahān made an immediate recapture impossible.

In this remarkable painting Jahāngīr shows his psychological effort to overcome his anxieties about this political problem. In his vision the tension is relieved and the adversary comes submissively to be received and forgiven in brotherly love. Both are united in the immense halo composed of sun and moon, an allusion to Jahāngīr's name Nūr ad-dīn (Light of Religion) which is also found in other paintings (see Pl. 14). The symbolic animals on which the sovereigns stand indicate Jahāngīr's wishful thinking about their relative strength; at the same time the peaceful association of lion and sheep shows that the Messianic age has arrived in the world, which is shown in the form of a partially visible globe.

It is difficult to fix the precise date of this miniature. The age of the emperor is more advanced than in his Ajmer likeness (Pl. 11), which dates from 1615 or 1616. On the other hand, political conditions after the capture of Qandahār make it unlikely that the emperor could deceive himself that the Shah would come as a suppliant to his throne. This suggests the period between Khān 'Ālam's mission to the Iranian court where he was received in 1618 and the capture of Qandahār in 1622, probably toward the end of this span of time, just when the news of a possible attack reached the Mughal court.





## PLATE 13 JAHĀNGĪR ENTERTAINS SHĀH 'ABBĀS

Jahāngīr Period. Circa A.D. 1618-1622

Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 42.16. Same size

This painting represents the sequence of the one shown in Pl. 12. The emperor is now entertaining his royal guest, whom he calls "his brother" in his own ascription above the shah's head. At this function, Āṣaf Khān, Jahāngīr's main adviser and brother-in-law, and Khān 'Ālam, his ambassador to Iran, and chief falconer (*qushbeqi*), assist.

The sentiment expressed in the painting is voiced by the verses above and below :

*When king Jahāngīr and Shāh 'Abbās, two fortunate kings, shadows of God,  
In happiness hold the cup of Jamshīd and in rulership sit side by side,  
The world becomes populous through their justice.  
The people of the world are at peace when they meet as friend and brother.  
O Lord, may they enjoy together in rulership.*

This symbol of co-existence takes the form of an imaginary entertainment, given with all possible splendour. Many of the rich appurtenances from foreign lands speak for the emperor's wealth, cosmopolitan attitude and fondness of curios; the square table and the ewer on the left are Italian; so are the two large golden vessels which originally may have been made as church reliquaries, but are now probably used as incense burners; and the stemmed wine glass is Venetian. On the other hand, the little brown cup with a tiny white prune branch is Chinese. However, the golden wine cup, saucer and bottle held by Āṣaf Khān and the big round bottle, though inspired by Chinese or Persian models, are most likely of Indian workmanship. The most curious object in this display is the gilded bronze figure of a Diana riding on a stag, a type of ornament made in various versions by several well-known goldsmiths in Augsburg during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. These objects were set on wheels to run on a table by means of a mechanism in the base. They were hollow and filled with about a pint of wine which the guest in front of whom the figure stopped had to drink by opening the top, which is hinged below the head. Such drinking devices had been made popular by the automata of al-Jazari who had built them for the Ortoqid Sultan Maḥmūd al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ. In 1206 on the instigation of his king he wrote a book about them of which many Arabic, Turkish and Indian copies are extant. Its ideas were taken up by European artists of the 16th and 17th centuries. This painting shows that one of these western versions came, in turn, back to the East.

The emperor is slightly bigger and more self-assured than his guest who kneels next to him on the throne dais. Indeed, Shāh 'Abbās seems to listen to his host with a certain deference. In this instance the anonymous artist dispensed with symbolic animals and the all-encompassing halo. To stress the exalted lineage of Jahāngīr he included, however, his genealogy up to Tīmūr and had it held up, like a sun or a heavenly seal, by two European-type cupids.



دوشاه جهانگیر غیاث شاه دوشاه جوانبخت سال الله بشاد کی شکوه مجسم بدولت نشیند پهلوی هم



جهان دآباد و از عدستان  
بباشند چو دهن جهان  
جو یار و برادر هم در خور  
الهی بولست ز هم ز خور

PLATE 14 JAHĀNGĪR PREFERRING A ŠŪFĪ SHAIKH TO KINGS

Artist Bichitr. Jahāngīr period. Circa A.D. 1625

Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. No. 42.15. Same size

The meaning of this allegorical painting is indicated by its inscription :

*Shāh Nūr ad-dīn Jahāngīr, son of Akbar, the emperor.*

*He is emperor in form and spirit through the grace of God.*

*Although to all appearances kings stand before him,*

*He looks inwardly towards the dervishes (for guidance).*

With an other-worldly look Jahāngīr is handing a book to a shaikh who is receiving it with his scarf. The latter can be identified as Shaikh Husain, who headed the celebrated shrine of the saint Khwājeh Mu‘in ad-dīn Chishtī in Ajmer. The turbaned figure next to him in a worshipful gesture represents the Ottoman sultan, whom Jahāngīr’s great ancestor Tīmūr had captured and humbled. This image must have been taken from a European picture and the model might well have been one of the Magi from a scene of Christ’s Nativity, where Turkish type figures often appear. The other king is James I of England, possibly copied from one of the miniatures brought by Sir Thomas Roe. The Hindu court official in the lower left shows, within a frame, a representation of an elephant and two horses attended by a groom making the *taslīm*; they are the usual presents for the emperor or his own gifts, and it may be either an image reflected in a mirror or a painting, in which case the official would be Bichitr, the artist.

The composition is full of regal splendour and symbolic allusions. The emperor is seated on a large hourglass on a European mounting, placed on a fine Italian tapestry with “grotesques”. To alleviate the ever-menacing fate of time running-out, two little cupids have just written on the hourglass, “O Shah, may the span of your life be a thousand years.” Behind the left cupid one notices the stoop used by the emperor to ascend his throne. This explains the Atlaslike base, as it had to carry the “World-Seizer”. On the very spot on which Jahāngīr placed his foot while stepping up, the painter, in humility, placed his signature. The emperor’s head is surrounded by a large, resplendent halo composed of sun and moon, since metaphorically speaking he has assumed the function of the heavenly bodies; at the same time this is an allusion to his name Nūr ad-dīn (Light of Religion). The spurning of the kings in favour of the Šūfī shaikh explains why the flying cupids do not present the paraphernalia of kingship to the emperor but are turning from him crying or with a broken arrow.

The haggard face of the emperor shows that this is a painting of his later years, when the effects of his intemperate life had undermined his health and he was embittered by personal and political misfortunes. Such a date is corroborated because Shāh ‘Abbās of Iran, who in earlier years had sent many embassies, is not one of the attending kings. Having proven himself the stronger in the Qandahār affair he became, after 1622, unsuitable for such an allegorical miniature.



